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Tomato Soup with Giant Garlic Croutons

We usually "put up" at least 50 quarts of tomatoes each year and use them to make sauces, stews, and soups. This soup is easy to make and has a bright, fresh flavor. I like to serve it in big, flat bowls garnished with giant garlic croutons; but my husband prefers a nice toasty grilled cheddar cheese sandwich with his.

1 tablespoon olive oil
2 tablespoons unsalted butter
2 cups sweet onion, diced
8 large cloves of garlic, 6 minced and 2 cut in half vertically
4 cups canned whole tomatoes, crushed, reserving the juices, prefer home canned tomatoes
2 cups chicken broth, prefer homemade
1 tablespoon extra fine granulated sugar
Kosher salt and freshly ground pepper
6 ½ inch slices of a crusty baguette cut on the diagonal
Best quality olive oil
6 teaspoons freshly grated parmesan cheese

In a large saucepan, over medium-low heat, heat the oil and butter.

Add the onions and cook, stirring occasionally, until softened but not browned, about 5-7 minutes.

Add the 6 cloves of minced garlic and cook for 2 more minutes, stirring occasionally.

Add the crushed tomatoes, their juices, the chicken broth, sugar and bring to a boil.

Reduce the heat to medium-low and gently simmer for 15 minutes.

Remove the pan from the heat and puree the vegetable-broth mixture with a hand held, immersion blender until smooth.

Add salt and pepper to taste.

Toast both sides of the bread slices under the broiler or in a toaster oven until lightly browned.

Rub one side of the bread slices with the remaining garlic.

Pour the soup into individual serving bowls and float a bread slice on top of the soup.

Lightly drizzle the bread slice with the olive oil and lightly sprinkle with a bit of salt, pepper and cheese.

Serves 6.

Victoria Wesseler